

METAPROGRAM APPROACH IN THE PROCESS OF SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT OF PERSONNEL IN FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

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Abstract. The aim of the article is to deepen the theoretical foundations and develop practical recommendations for the use of meta-program approach in the selection and evaluation of personnel in domestic financial institutions. The article summarizes various approaches to the definition of «metaprogram» in the field of personnel management and proposes its own definition of this category; the place and value of metaprograms in the job profile are determined; a standard metaprogram profile of the position of a financial institution risk management specialist is proposed and recommendations are provided for building a competency interview and interpreting its results in order to identify relevant metaprograms of an employee or candidate for this position. It has been proven that the main condition for successful detection of metaprograms in the interview process is the use of the right questions and the correct interpretation of answers to them, which helps to identify stable deep psychological attitudes that determine human perception of objective reality and response to organizational methods. Metaprograms are a kind of filter of information coming from objective reality to human consciousness through the senses, turning it into subjective perception and the corresponding reactions associated with it. The use of a metaprogram approach in assessing a person's suitability for the position, along with classical, traditional methods, avoids errors in the selection and evaluation of staff. Defining and taking into account employee metaprograms is also the key to more effective management. In addition, it allows him to find a job in which he will be most effective, and the activity itself, in accordance with the internal attitudes of the employee, will bring him maximum pleasure. Taking into account metaprograms allows you to use adequate tools to stimulate work, gives an understanding of the causes of certain interpersonal relationships in the team, helps prevent conflicts and high staff turnover.

Keywords: metaprogram, human resources management, personnel, financial institution, job profile.

JEL Classification M12, M51, G21

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МЕТАПРОГРАМНИЙ ПІДХІД ДО ВІДБОРУ ТА ОЦІНКИ ПЕРСОНАЛУ ФІНАНСОВОЇ УСТАНОВИ

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Анотація. Метою статті є поглиблення теоретичних основ і розроблення практичних рекомендацій щодо використання метапрограмного підходу при відборі та оцінці персоналу у вітчизняних фінансових установах. Узагальнено різні підходи до визначення поняття «метапрограма» у сфері управління персоналом і запропоновано власне визначення цієї категорії; визначено місце і значення метапрограм у профілі посади; запропоновано стандартний метапрограмний профіль посади фахівця з управління ризиками фінансової установи і надано рекомендації з побудови компетентнісного інтерв'ю та інтерпретації його результатів на предмет виявлення відповідних метапрограм працівника чи кандидата на цю посаду. Доведено, що головною умовою успішного виявлення метапрограм у процесі інтерв'ю є використання правильних запитань і правильна інтерпретація відповідей на них, що допомагає виявити стійкі глибинні психологічні установки, що визначають сприйняття людиною об'єктивної реальності та реакцію на організаційні методи. Саме метапрограми є своєрідним фільтром інформації, що надходить від об'єктивної реальності до людської свідомості через органи чуття, перетворюючи її в суб'єктивне сприйняття і відповідні реакції, пов'язані з ним. Використання метапрограмного підходу в оцінці придатності особи до займаної посади, поряд із класичними, традиційними методами, дозволяє уникнути помилок у підборі та оцінці персоналу. Визначення і врахування метапрограм співробітника також є ключем до ефективнішого управління. Крім того, це дозволяє знайти йому заняття, у якому він буде найбільш ефективним, а сама діяльність, відповідно до внутрішніх установок співробітника, принесе йому максимальне задоволення. Врахування метапрограм дозволяє використовувати адекватні інструменти для стимулювання роботи, дає розуміння причин певних міжособистісних стосунків у колективі, допомагає запобігти конфліктам і високій плинності кадрів.

Ключові слова: метапрограма, управління людськими ресурсами, персонал, фінансова установа, профіль посади.

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Relevance of the topic. High-performance work of the staff of a financial institution is only possible when an individual approach to each employee is used. Without this, it is impossible to predict his/her reaction to certain methods and means of managing organizational behavior, to determine the level of suitability for certain tasks, compliance with a position, to create conditions for maximum realization of his personal and professional potential.

As a result, the role of neurolinguistic programming in human resource management based on a metaprogrammatic approach is growing and expanding. Unfortunately, Ukrainian financial institutions are only at the beginning of the path of extensive use of already developed tools and techniques for identifying and using metaprograms. However, current realities, especially the exacerbation of risks and threats due to the financial and economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the growth of the personal factor in ensuring the competitiveness of the organization and the complexity of personnel management tasks, maximize the need for their application.

Psychological methods and approaches in human resource management are the subject of active research. They are the subject of works by foreign and domestic specialists in this field. The term «metaprogramming» was originally used in the field of IT to denote programs that generate other programs. Regarding human thinking, it was first used by John Lilly in the book «Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer: Theory and Experiments» [1; 2], where he, in particular, compared human consciousness and thinking with mechanized processing of information.

The concept of metaprograms in the context of neurolinguistic programming was first used by Leslie Cameron-Bandler [3]. Roger Bailey and Ross Steward proposed

to include this approach in the field of business management [4]. T. James and W. Woodsmall expanded the existing methodology [5], combining the concept of metaprogram with the Myers-Briggs questionnaire [6], which allowed to diagnose it. Reese and Bagley developed a methodology for using metaprograms in the process of determining consumer types and researching their profile.

However, the problems of their practical use in the field of human resources management of a financial institution are still insufficiently studied in foreign and domestic scientific literature.

The purpose of the study is to deepen the theoretical foundations and develop practical recommendations for the use of metaprogram approach in the selection and assessment of personnel in domestic financial institutions.

Results of the research. Metaprograms are the individual characteristics of each person, without which effective personnel management is impossible. One of the main advantages of using metaprograms is establishing effective communication when evaluating a person's values, the ability to predict his/her behavior in certain situations, thereby reducing the risk of errors in choosing a candidate or assessing an employee. The positive consequences of this approach are greater mutual understanding between all members of the team, increasing its cohesion and productivity.

Despite the fact that the concept of «metaprogram» is increasingly used in the field of psychology, marketing and management, it still has not acquired a well-established, common meaning. In particular, R. B. Dilts saw them as «a level of mental programming that determines how we sort, orient to, and chunk our experiences» [7]. A. Pangrikar called metaprograms «unconscious filters in our mind that work without human awareness,

determining human behavior and actions in a particular situation» [8], R. W. Bandler, J. La Valle defined metaprograms as «processes by which a person sorts his / her gained experience and responds to various new stimuli in the environment» [9], S. Shipunov saw them as «a method of diagnosing staff for the ability to perform certain functions that need to be identified during the interview [10]».

Based on the generalization of different approaches to the interpretation of the concept of «metaprogram», we can give it the following definition: «A metaprogram is a relatively stable, deep psychological attitude, a person's inner conviction that determines his perception of objective reality and reaction to the processes taking place in his/her external and internal (personal) environment.»

Metaprograms are based on a person's innate mental characteristics, are formed in early childhood, and can largely depend on the person's gender, age, social status, and cultural context in which he or she is. Although they are relatively stable structures of a person's personality, they can change in some way as a result of experience or education. They are formed by metaprograms, largely exist at the subconscious level, and particularly because of this they are quite complex to study or research.

Their existence explains why different people often see an identical situation and react to it almost in opposite ways, which is the main difficulty of human resource management. Those individuals whose metaprograms are similar, i.e. the processing of information by their subconscious minds is based on similar principles, find it easier to find common ground and mutual understanding, and therefore interact more cohesively. On the contrary, opposing metaprograms create the basis for psychological incompatibility and conflict.

In general, each metaprogram is understood as a certain range of certain reactions, approaches to solving a certain problem, vision of a problem or just a way of acting within some extreme options. As E. C. Patrick noted in his work «Moving Metaprograms Beyond Flatland», «metaprograms are continuums, the endpoints of which are opposite ways of perceiving the situation and, consequently, human behavior» (Fig.).

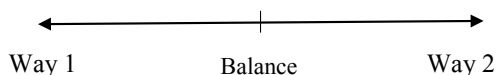


Fig. Metaprogram as a continuum according to E. C. Patrick

Source: developed by the author on the basis of elaboration [11].

Their defining is one of the purposes of conducting interviews with the aim, in particular, to identify the type of motivation of the employee, perception and behavior in a given situation and so on.

The main problem with the use of metaprograms in human resource management is the lack of an established approach to their classification, the complexity of their

identification and the lack of universal methods of their use. In particular, M. Hall and B. Bodenhamer distinguish 51 metaprograms, uniting them in five categories on certain aspects of human behavior, perception, and emotional state:

- data processing (cognitive and perceptual models of information processing) (11 metaprograms);
- sensations and perceptions (emotional type and somatic personality type) (9 metaprograms);
- decision making (volitional and unconscious) (8 metaprograms);
- reactivity (behavior and reaction) (12 metaprograms);
- «Kant's categories» (conceptualization and semantization) (11 metaprograms) [12].

Although this classification fully reflects all aspects of human thinking and behavior, in modern conditions, its shorter version is used, which saves costs and time for surveys and other research. In particular, the range is determined:

- type of reference: internal — external — mixed;
- desire — avoidance;
- process — result;
- procedures — opportunities;
- similarity — difference;
- single — team player — manager;
- content — environment;
- activity — reflectivity [2].

This classification is usually based on the principle shown in Fig., i.e. the extreme options are opposites. The real level of expression of a metaprogram and its sign (+ or -) is purely individual and unique, however, in practical work using a metaprogram approach, they are evaluated on a scale.

In particular, the internal reference involves the appeal of a person to his/her own criteria for assessing phenomena and events based on his/her ideas and beliefs. The main characteristics of internal reference are: independence of judgments, assessments and actions; the ability to defend one's own point of view; ability to make decisions independently; assertiveness. For people with a strong external reference, the opinion of the people around them, on the contrary, is very important, decisive in the decision-making process. The main characteristics of the external reference are: diligence; patience; ability to adapt to the interlocutor; flexibility, adaptability; taking into account the needs of another person [13].

Within the Type of Reference metaprogram contextual orientation is also highlighted. This is a variant of external reference; however it is not related to people, but to external circumstances.

When making a decision in professional activities, a person with a focus on the context will refer to external indicators — reports, norms, standards, rules, etc. For example, middle managers and professionals, working with financial indicators, often evaluate the effectiveness of their activities based on different (objective) indicators.



For representatives of mixed references, both their opinion and the feedback of others are equally important, i.e. there is a balance between internal and external references.

To a large extent, the employee's behavior is dominated by a variant of a pair of metaprograms — «desire» and «avoidance». The thinking of the first representatives is usually aimed at a positive perception of people and situations. Characteristics of «desire» are as follows: positive attitude to success, ability to take risks; mistakes and difficulties are perceived as experience and opportunity for development; the ability to easily find common ground with other people [2].

«Avoidance» is another extreme case of this metaprogram. The thinking of people who have it is aimed at a negative, pessimistic perception of the world around them. They find it difficult to reconcile desired goals or outcomes because they focus on what to avoid, on escaping mistakes. Such people are negative, they are waiting for threats, troubles, including those created by other people. It is difficult for them to trust, to rely on someone, their principle is «Trust, but verify».

The metaprogram pair that determines the predominant focus on «process» or «result» will also determine different human behavior. A person who is closer to the first type is process-oriented, and it is easier for him/her to do monotonous, same type work (no matter, intellectual or not). If the employee has the opposite version of this metaprogram, in his/her work he/she needs to quickly achieve the task. The end result of his work should be comprehensive. At the same time, the focus on the result may be accompanied by neglecting the rules that determine the process of achieving them. On the one hand, this may be useful in a non-standard or extreme situation, on the other hand it may lead to a decline in the quality of the result, for example, due to violations of technology [8].

As for the pair of «procedures — opportunities» metaprograms, an employee with a «procedure» mindset is more efficient at following clear instructions. He/she will always follow the established rules and follow the technology. Violating them (even by other people) is a source of internal discomfort for him. The advantage of employees with the mindset of «opportunities» is the search for new ways to solve the same problems.

Such employees can evade scrupulous adherence to the rules, they are more creative, they easily adapt to any changes in the organization or the external environment. They are open to new knowledge, and are the first to use innovation.

Characteristics of the «similarity» metaprogram, i.e. focus on finding common ground with other people, are: the ability to establish contact; ability to compromise; ability to maintain a conversation. «Difference», i.e. the focus on finding «otherness» in other people, is characterized by difficulties in establishing contacts, increased demands on them and conflict [8].

A person characterized by a marked pole of «general», perceives the whole picture, tends to generalizations, likes to work in a wide time frame. He/she successfully resolves conflicts, easily finds and discusses common interests with others. On the contrary, a specialist with a pronounced «special» metaprogram focuses on the details of the work, feels comfortable when understands how to act in a certain period of time. He/she concentrates well on the work, which requires a large number of small interrelated actions, the sequence of which it is desirable not to break [14].

The metaprogram, whose points are a set of settings, conventionally called «single», «team player» and «manager» should also be taken into account when determining the suitability of the employee for the position. Personal achievements and individual result of work are important for the «single». Such people are independent; able to take responsibility; focused on personal results. The «team player» is more effective when he/she feels part of the team, motivated by performing tasks together with the group. He is not inclined to take responsibility, but the so-called «team spirit» is important to him. For example, in team sports, less talented «team players» will show better results during the game than a team consisting of «singles», even if they are very talented. Because they will compete with each other, «hog the covers», there by interfering with coordinated work.

The «manager» feels comfortable being at the head of the group. He/she is a natural leader, leads, organizes and coordinates the activities of other participants, he/she is motivated by the result of the team, which he/she feels as his/her own achievement. A group of «team players» led by a manager, which has a «manager» metaprogram is an ideal option for both the football team and the project team.

The «content» metaprogram means that a person is interested in the content of his work, it must be meaningful. Such a person has an analytical, systematic structure of thinking, able to focus on numbers and facts. He/she enjoys work related to calculations, analysis, systematization and generalization. People with the «environment» metaprogram are focused on the people around them, interested in them, their personal traits and feelings. Such people are usually sociable and customer-oriented [14].

As for the «activity» and «reflectivity» pair of metaprograms, the «active» person is focused primarily on action rather than analysis of the situation, acts decisively in it, tends to take risks, but is unable to take into account all the details, often can't get the job done because he/she is caught up with the new project. A person with a predominant tendency to «reflectivity» before making a decision, tries to analyze everything in advance, carefully consider all the details, take into account all the alternatives. However, it should be borne in mind that such an employee will take more time to make a decision

than usual, which makes him ineffective in non-standard or extreme situations when time is running short. At the same time, if there is no time limit, such an employee is indispensable, because his decisions are more reasonable and balanced, and therefore more likely to be correct [14].

The successful functioning of an employee and the achievement of his/her goals is largely determined by the extent to which the internal positions of his/her personality, in particular the dominant metaprograms, correspond to a specific position. Nevertheless, in many financial institutions HR managers determine this compliance purely by formal (age, gender, education, work experience), or only by professional (knowledge, skills, abilities) characteristics, often not imagining what deep psychological attitudes, the inner convictions of the individual will be able to provide him/her for maximum efficiency in a particular position.

As a result, low staff satisfaction, conflicts, high staff turnover, additional costs associated with it, low productivity. Hence the management's frustration with employees, their diligence, moral qualities, as well as (and it often happens) claims to the education system, which «does not prepare them properly». An employee who is forced to perform work that does not correspond to his/her metaprogram type is constantly outside the «comfort zone», experiencing stress, losing motivation to work. Tools for motivating that are used without taking into account metaprograms, as a rule, do not achieve their goal.

The basic principle of directing the «right» employee to the «right» position is to define all his characteristics, including metaprograms, necessary for the effective use of responsibilities and their reflection in the job profile. Of course, knowledge, skills and abilities are also important and must be diagnosed. But no less the effectiveness of the employee depends on how the person meets the metaprogram profile of the position.

A possible variant of such a metaprogram profile of the position, proposed by A. Karpov and T. Makota provides an assessment of human compliance with the above pairs of metaprogram options.

Of course, other classifications proposed by both foreign and Ukrainian researchers can be used. Some of them may be of non-principled importance for some positions, some of them may be of fundamental importance, and the presence of others may be defined as desirable but optional. In this regard, we suggest supplementing the metaprogram job profile with an indication of the degree of desirability of a metaprogram (see below).

For each position it is necessary to determine in advance the necessary or desired metaprograms. In this case, either the analytical method or the method of analogies is used. In the first case, metaprograms are determined on the basis of the specifics of the tasks that the employee will have to perform, working conditions and so on. The other approach lies in evaluating the metaprograms of the most effective employee in the position, identify those that determine the effectiveness. The combination of both approaches is optimal. Creating a metaprogram profile of the position can be done with the involvement of all interested persons (HR manager, future manager, even on the basis of customer surveys).

When assessing a person's suitability for a specific position, the metaprogram profile of the position is compared with its metaprogram portrait. To do this, one need to build it, which can be done based on the results of the interview. Metaprogram identification questions are part of structured interview questions. As a result, a human resources specialist may be more likely to find a candidate for a specific position or give an objective assessment of the employee's suitability for it.

In this case, in contrast to the written or computerized questionnaire, which is usually conducted to determine the professional competencies of the employee or candidate, the interview takes into account not only the answer (which may be socially acceptable, but false), but also wording used, gestures, sequence of words in enumerations, pauses in speech, etc.

This requires the interviewer to have a thorough knowledge of psychology, experience and observation. Sometimes this interview is recorded and revised to clarify and interpret some points more accurately. Other interested and competent people are often invited to watch. At the same time, the assessment of a person's compliance with this position by this method should not replace, but complement other methods. This is due to the significant subjective component of the interpretation of evaluation results and the diversity and, often, the uniqueness of the manifestation of metaprogram characteristics.

In the course of the investigation, interested parties of a number of financial institutions in the region were interviewed about the tasks and characteristics that they believe make an employee effective in risk management. The standard metaprogram profile of such a position has been proposed (Table), as well as the method of constructing a metaprogram portrait of a candidate for it on the basis of questions and interpretation of answers (see Table).

Table

Standard metaprogram profile of the position of chief accountant

Metaprogram	3	2	1	Mixed features	1	2	3	Metaprogram
Internal reference								External reference
Desire								Avoidance
Result								Process

Table (continued)

Metaprogram	3	2	1	Mixed features	1	2	3	Metaprogram
Opportunities								Procedures
General (similarity)								Special (difference)
Single								Team player
Content								Environment
Activity								Reflectivity

Required

Desirable

Source: developed by the author on the basis of elaboration [2; 15].

An internal reference is needed by a risk management specialist because it determines his/her assertiveness, independence of judgment, evaluation, and action, although there may be situations when it is important to listen to the views of, for example, a director or supervisor. The avoidance metaprogram usually encourages careful work to avoid errors and violations that may be detected during inspections. Such a specialist should not get tired and lose motivation to work monotonously, should strictly follow all procedures and rules of documentation, that's why «procedures» and «process» metaprograms are necessary. Although the result, in the form of, for instance, a report got in time can also be a motivator to work.

Although the «difference» metaprogram is not mandatory (especially in combination with the «avoidance» metaprogram), but excessive empathy of the «similarity» metaprogram is also not very relevant for the position on which the finances of a huge range of subjects depend, as well as the «opportunities» metaprogram because it threatens to deviate from the regulations.

As for the range of characteristics from «single» to «team player», it all depends on the position in the organizational structure: leading the relevant department, such a specialist should be more like a manager. Analytical, systematic type of thinking are required; work with numbers, regulations should be a «comfort zone»; thoughtfulness in decision-making is desirable, and all of this is determined by the «reflectivity» metaprogram.

To diagnose the type of reference, it is suggested to use open-ended questions to find out the evaluation of something. For example, when answering the question: «What work result do you consider the best?» — a more desirable response for a candidate for the position of risk management specialist is the one in which there is no evaluation of others (for example, «The result approved by management») or evaluation based on some indicators (for example, «The one which will bring the highest benefit»). A person with an internal reference is more likely to give his own assessment (for example, «The result which I will enjoy»).

Diagnosis of a candidate's orientation to «desire» or «avoidance» is based on the use of questions about

important, relevant things or events (for example, «What is most important for you when choosing a job?», or «Describe an ideal organization in which you would like to work», etc.). Necessary predominance of negative wording (for example, when answering the first question, the answer may be: «It is when you don't need to get to work by vehicle», or «The one where there is no need to commit violations», etc.).

As mentioned above, the risk management specialist should be satisfied with the work process itself: calculations, reconciliations, development of instructions, etc. Therefore, the «process» metaprogram is required. Such a question can be asked: «How do you plan your working day?»; «What is more important for you in competitions: victory or participation?»; «What do you like most about your work?» Desirable answers: «When planning, first determine the main areas of work, then...»; «The main thing is not victory, but participation»; «I like to do calculations» and so on.

The «process» metaprogram is amplified by the «procedures» metaprogram. Answers to such questions will help to reveal it: «What are your actions if there is an unusual situation that is not specified in the instructions?»; «Will you make your proposals in the existing rules of the organization?»; «Will you resist the unacceptable, in your opinion, rules implemented at the level of organization of processes, etc.?»; «Are any forms of workplace experiments acceptable to you?» Here are responses that will indicate the predominance of the «procedure» metaprogram: «I will try to solve the problem basing on existing instructions.» «No, I will follow the prescribed rules and instructions.» «I will follow the plans of the organization's management, if it does not have negative consequences for me personally or my work.» «No» [16].

Diagnosis of the «single» metaprogram involves the use of questions in which it is proposed to describe any activities that can be implemented both individually and collectively. (For example, «Describe your most significant achievements»; «Describe a work situation that you are happy to remember»). In the answers to such questions, the frequency of using the pronouns «I» or «we» is indicative, determining the tendency of a person to position

himself as a single or team player. A possible description of the ongoing processes, emphasizing his/her leading role in their development and regulation, indicates that the respondent has the «manager» metaprogram.

To diagnose the «content» metaprogram such questions should be used: «Which employee, in your opinion, can be called effective?»; «What is necessary for a quality probationary period in the institution?»; «What or who has made a major contribution to your professional success?». Such answers are inherent in the «content» metaprogram: «An effective leader achieves goals at minimal cost»; «It is necessary to perform the tasks carefully»; «Education, experience gained over the years and my competencies». Diagnosis of the «reflectivity» metaprogram, which is desirable for a risk management specialist, is carried out using questions aimed at describing any actions and the sequence of their implementation («Describe what will be your starting point in working on the report»). The answers assess the emphasis on actions or building plans, concepts, developing ideas for the implementation of an action.

Conclusions. Thus, the main condition for successful detection of metaprograms in the interview process is the use of the right questions and the correct interpretation of answers to them, which will help identify stable deep psychological attitudes that determine human perception of objective reality and response to organizational methods. Metaprograms are a kind of filter of information

coming from objective reality to human consciousness through the senses, transforming it into subjective perception and the corresponding reactions associated with it.

It cannot be considered that in human resources management, some focus of a metaprogram and the degree of its expression is the best or worst option. It all depends on the context and the goal that the organization seeks to achieve. Usually, the preference given to some metaprogram in the process of personnel selection or assessment is determined by the specifics of the tasks to be solved by the employee in a particular position, and personal characteristics that he/she must possess to solve them.

The use of the metaprogram approach in assessing a person's suitability for the position, along with classical, traditional methods, can help avoid mistakes in the selection and assessment of personnel. Identifying and taking into account the employee's metaprograms is also the key to more effective management. Besides, it allows to find him/her an activity in which he/she will be most effective, and the activity itself, in accordance with the internal attitudes of the employee, will bring him/her maximum satisfaction. Taking into account metaprograms allows using adequate tools to stimulate work, gives an understanding of the reasons for certain interpersonal relationships within the team, helps to prevent conflicts and high staff turnover.

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